

Joint Committee on Judiciary

Raised Bill No. 462, *An Act Concerning Civil Restraining and Protective Orders*
Submitted by: Catherine Bailey, Legal and Public Policy Director, Connecticut Women's
Education & Legal Fund
March 17, 2014

My name is Catherine Bailey and I am the Legal and Public Policy Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls, and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. For over 40 years, CWEALF has provided a free Information & Referral Line on family, employment, education and civil rights law. The majority of these questions involve family law questions, with some involving situations with violence.

We support Senate Bill 462 because strong laws regarding protective orders are critical to the safety of domestic violence victims and their families. Relationships involving violence most often involve the exertion of control over the victim. This control extends to finances, as well. Many victims don't seek a restraining order because they know they will be left with no money, housing, or food without the abuser's finances. It is therefore critical to add the proposed protections in this bill that would prohibit the transferring of jointly-owned property or the termination of utilities, health coverage, and other insurance benefits. In situations where the abuser is financially able, it is also critical for the court to have the ability to order continuation of short-term support to the victim and her family for basic needs; a common-sense proposal that will cut down on shelter stays and the need for public assistance.

CWEALF also supports a study of the current procedures for the service of restraining orders because current system places unreasonable burdens on victims of domestic violence. From a personal standpoint, during my time as a law student in Massachusetts, I worked in a domestic violence clinic, helping victims to obtain restraining orders in court. Upon the order of a temporary, ex parte restraining order, the court clerk automatically forwarded the order to the police department in the town where the abuser resided. The police department then served the abuser with notice of the emergency order, as well as the date, time, and place for him to appear for a subsequent hearing on the duration of the order. Municipal law enforcement agencies, in a superior position to locate the whereabouts of their residents, were effective at carrying out service promptly and safely. Placing the burden on victims to navigate a maze of court procedures and forms is unreasonable and unfair. We encourage a thoughtful and in-depth review of the strengths of the system as well as areas that could be improved.

We therefore urge you to support this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.